United Nations A/72/865–S/2018/465

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
16 May 2018

Original: English

**General Assembly**
**Seventy-second session**
Agenda item 68 (a)
**Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**Security Council**
**Seventy-third year**

# Children and armed conflict

## Report of the Secretary-General

## I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2017, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2225 (2015). The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in the field and at Headquarters, and with relevant Member States. It highlights recent global trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and provides information on violations committed in 2017, as well as related protection concerns. Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and, in line with the resolutions of the Council, the annexes to the present report include a list of parties that, in violation of international law, engage in the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel,[1] and the abduction of children.

2. All the information provided in the report has been vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. In situations where the ability to verify information was hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. In this regard, the information contained in the report is only indicative and does not always represent the full scale of violations committed in 2017.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and in identifying situations that fall within the scope of the mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a pragmatic approach aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children. However, reference to a situation is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the present report documents situations in which apparent violations of

[1] Under the terms of Security Council resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2143 (2014), protected persons are considered to be teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



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international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by conflict are considered to be of such gravity as to warrant international concern. In characterizing the facts described below as grave violations, it is the aim of my Special Representative to bring these situations to the attention of national Governments, which bear the primary responsibility of providing effective protection and relief to all affected children, and to encourage Governments to take remedial measures.

4. Where significant progress was achieved and measures taken by listed parties positively affected the protection of children or where ongoing conduct gave rise to concern, this is highlighted in the country-specific sections. On the basis of the approach of enhanced engagement with Member States to prevent violations against children, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children during the reporting period and parties that have not.

# II. Addressing the impact of armed conflict on children

## A. Overview of the situation of children and armed conflict

5. Children continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict in many country situations. In 2017, there was a large increase in the number of violations compared with the number reported for 2016 (A/72/361-S/2017/821, para. 5), with at least 6,000 verified violations by government forces and more than 15,000 by a range of non-State armed groups.[2]

6. In 2017, changing conflict dynamics, including the intensification of armed clashes, directly affected children. Verified cases of the recruitment and use of children quadrupled in the Central African Republic (299) and doubled in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1,049) compared to 2016. The number of verified cases of the recruitment and use of children in Somalia (2,127), South Sudan (1,221), the Syrian Arab Republic (961) and Yemen (842) persisted at alarming levels. In addition, boys and girls recruited and used were often doubly victimized by subsequently being detained for their former association with armed forces or groups.

7. Surges in the recruitment and use of children often coincided with increasing levels of killing and maiming of children. In addition, spikes in armed clashes and violence led to a substantial increase in the number of child casualties in Iraq (717) and Myanmar (296). Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen remained the country situations with the highest number of verified casualties. In Nigeria, Boko Haram continued to force civilians, including children, to perpetrate suicide attacks, which led to over half of all the verified child casualties in the country.

8. Following the outbreak of violence in the Kasai region, there was an almost eightfold increase in attacks on schools and hospitals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, totalling 515 cases in 2017. The siege of Marawi in the southern Philippines also led to a sharp increase in such incidents.

9. Additional developments included the abduction of over 1,600 children by Al-Shabaab in Somalia, pointing to a sustained reliance on children for combat and support duties. A high number of denials of humanitarian access, including in Myanmar, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, prevented thousands

[2] The use of the term "incident" describes an action by a party to conflict that leads to one or more grave violations. "Violations" or "cases" refer to each individual child or protected structure affected by an incident. Incidents may therefore result in multiple violations (for instance, one incident of abduction may affect several children).

of children from receiving essential aid. The nature of constraints to humanitarian access differ vastly from one context to another, which is reflected in the focus of the reporting in the different country-specific sections. Over 900 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against girls and boys were verified across all country situations, representing an increase from last year. However, cases of conflict-related sexual violence remain particularly challenging to verify, including as a result of the sensitivity of the issue, and remain chronically underreported (for more information, see the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence, S/2018/250).

10. In contrast, in situations where Governments and listed armed groups enhanced their engagement on preventing grave violations, important advances in the strengthening of child protection were achieved. Regarding the Government of the Sudan, for example, close cooperation with the United Nations resulted in the full implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. A process of building on the action plan in order to develop a national plan for prevention has since been initiated.

## B. Strengthening partnerships to end and prevent grave violations against children

11. Preventing violations against children affected by conflict should be a primary concern of the international community. Failing to assume this collective responsibility affects not only the boys and girls living in insecurity, but may also amplify grievances between belligerent parties and reduce their ability to overcome conflict in a peaceful manner. And yet, as illustrated in the present report, time and again, armed conflict strips away layers of protection afforded by families, society and law and children are victimized as both the targets and the perpetrators of violence. We must do more to address this challenge by ensuring that child protection is made an integral part of any comprehensive strategy to prevent and resolve conflict in view of enabling sustainable peace and by promoting the close involvement of children during the development of such strategies.

12. Enhanced engagement with the Member States mentioned in the present report remains crucial in this regard. Action plans and other bilateral commitments provide the main framework for this engagement. Such commitments both address the immediate protection concerns and contribute to broader prevention by ensuring that national mechanisms are put in place to prevent future violations. In Afghanistan, child protection units in Afghan National Police centres have now been established in all but one province, preventing the recruitment of over 300 children in 2017. The Government of the Sudan issued formal command orders and directives to all Government forces to prevent child recruitment. The development of national, subregional or regional prevention plans, covering all listing violations, could support the systematization of preventive measures beyond the implementation period of action plans.

13. The global consensus among Member States that children should not be recruited and used in conflict also allowed for intensified engagement with armed groups. In the Central African Republic, such efforts resulted in the issuance of command orders by two armed groups barring the recruitment and use of children. Similarly, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad in Mali and the Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria signed action plans to release children from their ranks and prevent future recruitment. I encourage Member States to continue to facilitate the interaction between the United Nations and armed groups on the issue of child protection.

14. Engagement with armed forces and groups resulted in the formal release of over 10,000 children in 2017. In addition, an unknown number left such entities through informal pathways. While disengagement from armed actors is an essential first step, it is vital to ensure sustained psychosocial and educational reintegration support in order to break the cycle of violence and consolidate peace. Over 12,000 children were reintegrated during the reporting period by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and partners, but too many children were unable to benefit from such programmes. Cases documented in 2017 reconfirmed that when children are released but do not have access to appropriate long-term reintegration programmes they are particularly vulnerable and subject to mistreatment, social stigmatization and rerecruitment. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, over 8,000 children who have been released from armed groups are yet to receive basic socioeconomic reintegration support, owing to a lack of funding.

15. Ensuring predictable, sustained and flexible funding for the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict is essential to allow UNICEF and other child protection actors to set in place viable alternatives to military life and prevent their rerecruitment. Realizing this goal will require increasing child protection capacity and strengthening collaboration between child protection actors and potential reintegration funding partners, including concerned Member States, the World Bank and the Peacebuilding Fund.

16. Armed groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Boko Haram, continue to recruit and use children on a large scale, including across borders. It is therefore more important than ever to ensure adequate capacity to deal with the increasingly complex task of prevention, tracing and reintegration. The phenomenon of the cross-border recruitment of children and their repatriation requires a coordinated international response, based firmly on international law and drawing on international child protection standards. Denying children the opportunity to rejoin their communities and to gain access to services, or detaining them solely for their alleged association with such groups, runs counter to the best interest of the child and international protection standards, and may generate new grievances.

17. As reflected in the report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43), closer strategic and operational partnerships with regional and subregional actors is essential to address the challenge of sustaining peace. This approach was adopted by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, who initiated a process to further deepen her cooperation with regional and subregional actors in view of multiplying child protection efforts, including to address the cross-border nature of the recruitment and use of children and the growing number of unaccompanied children on the move. Such collaboration, closely involving UNICEF, facilitated the appointment of a Senior Child Protection Adviser by the African Union in January 2018, further strengthening the regional child protection architecture.

# III. Information on violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

## A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

### Afghanistan

18. Conflict-related violence continued to severely affect children throughout Afghanistan, with 3,179 verified cases of children killed and maimed in 2017. Although the number of verified cases represents a 10 per cent decrease in verified cases compared to 2016, casualty rates remain very high.

*Grave violations*

19. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 84 boys, and documented an additional 643 cases (all boys). Children were recruited and used for combat, as bodyguards, at checkpoints, to assist in intelligence gathering and to plant improvised explosive devices. When recruited by armed groups, children were also used to carry out suicide attacks.

20. Almost three quarters of the verified cases were perpetrated by armed groups (61), with 40 cases attributed to the Taliban, 19 to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) and 2 to undetermined armed groups. Cases attributed to ISIL-KP almost doubled in the reporting period. A total of 23 boys were recruited and used by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (Afghan National Police, 11; Afghan Local Police, 9; other Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 3). The cases predominantly included the informal use of children, including as guards at checkpoints.

21. As at December 2017, the Government reported that 171 children were held in juvenile rehabilitation centres on national security-related charges. On 7 November, 50 juveniles were transferred from the adult maximum-security detention facility in Parwan to the juvenile rehabilitation centre in Kabul, following sustained United Nations advocacy. However, following a reassessment of their age, in December, 21 of them were moved back to the detention facility in Parwan and 25 were reassigned elsewhere.

22. The United Nations verified 3,179 child casualties (861 killed and 2,318 injured), including 251 girls, accounting for 30 per cent of all civilian casualties. Overall, the leading causes were ground engagements (45 per cent), followed by incidents involving improvised explosive devices (17 per cent) and unexploded ordnance (16 per cent).

23. The United Nations attributed 723 child casualties to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 28 to pro-government militias and 21 to both pro-government militias and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces; 96 casualties were attributed to international military forces. In addition, 45 casualties were attributed either to joint operations of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and international military forces or could not be attributed specifically to either party. The continuing increase of child casualties resulting from aerial operations remains a concerning trend. In addition, 27 child casualties resulted from cross-border shelling out of Pakistan.

24. Armed groups perpetrated 1,384 child casualties, including 1,105 casualties attributed to the Taliban, 94 to ISIL-KP, 9 to joint operations of ISIL-KP and the

Taliban and 176 to undetermined armed groups. Child casualties resulting from complex and suicide attacks increased by 34 per cent (207 casualties).

25. Four cases of sexual violence, including rape (1) and sexual abuse (3) against boys as young as 13 were verified, three of which were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and one to the Taliban. The United Nations documented an additional 78 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against boys, most of which related to the practice of *bacha bazi*. Impunity for perpetrators remains a serious challenge.

26. For the second consecutive year, verified incidents of attacks against schools and education personnel decreased (68 incidents). Armed groups perpetrated 55 of the incidents (Taliban, 41; ISIL-KP, 7; undetermined armed groups, 7). Furthermore, three such incidents were attributed to pro-government militias, two to Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, two to international military forces and two to cross-border shelling out of Pakistan.

27. A total of 58 incidents of attacks on hospitals and protected personnel were verified, a 50 per cent reduction compared to 2016. Incidents included direct attacks on health facilities (18), direct attacks on health personnel (18) and threats of attack (22). Among those, 52 incidents were attributed to armed groups (Taliban, 37; ISIL-KP, 4; undetermined armed groups, 11), and 5 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

28. The United Nations verified 16 incidents of the military use of schools and hospitals: 10 by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 4 by the Taliban and 2 by ISIL-KP.

29. A total of 19 incidents of abduction, involving 41 boys and 2 girls, were verified. Among those cases, 32 were attributed to the Taliban, 6 to ISIL-KP (including the two girls), and 1 to a pro-government militia.

30. The United Nations documented 39 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, 29 of which were verified. All verified incidents were attributed to armed groups (Taliban, 22; ISIL-KP, 3; undetermined armed groups, 4). Incidents included the killing and injuring as well as the abduction of humanitarian personnel.

*Developments and concerns*

31. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I commend the Government for the measures taken to better protect children affected by armed conflict. These measures had a positive effect on the implementation of its action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and the use of children by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, including through the establishment of 12 new child protection units in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, the revision of the Penal Code, which now criminalizes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and the practice of *bacha bazi*, as well as the adoption of a child protection policy.

32. Notwithstanding the progress made in preventing the formal recruitment of children, I urge the Government to address remaining gaps, in particular the lack of screening mechanisms in the Afghan Local Police, the use of children at police checkpoints, the absence of measures for the protection, reintegration and support of children formerly associated with armed forces or groups, as well as the lack of accountability for the perpetrators of grave violations against children. I strongly encourage the Government to prioritize prevention and consider alternatives to detention for children formerly associated with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, pro-government militias or armed groups, in line with international juvenile justice principles, and ensure their reintegration into society.

33. While dialogue with armed groups regarding child protection continues, the level of violations has remained at an alarming level and I urge these parties to engage with the United Nations in pursuit of elaborating action plans.

34. I remain deeply concerned about the continuing high number of children killed and maimed and call on all parties to take immediate action to better protect children.

**Central African Republic**

35. The conflict escalated throughout the country, with confrontations between the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)-led coalition[3] against the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) in Ouaka and Haute-Kotto Prefectures, and anti-balaka associated militias against UPC in Mbomou Prefecture. Towards the end of 2017, fighting intensified between a faction of the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), anti-balaka elements and Révolution et justice (RJ). In addition, attacks against civilians and humanitarians increased, leading to mass displacement and child casualties.

*Grave violations*

36. The number of children recruited and used more than quadrupled compared to 2016, with 196 boys and 103 girls affected, some as young as 8 years of age. Cases were attributed to UPC (89), FPRC (62), MPC (53), anti-balaka elements (32), joint operations by FPRC/MPC[4] (23), ex-Séléka renovée (16), Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) (14), Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (9) and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (1). Children were used as combatants, porters, informants, cooks and for sexual purposes.

37. A total of 104 children, including 34 girls, were killed (61) and maimed (43) by shooting, stabbing and when their houses were torched during clashes. Perpetrators included anti-ba'aka elements (34), UPC (29), FPRC (5), FPRC/MPC (4), 3R (3), MPC (2), FDPC, a self-defence group and the national security forces (1 each). Most of the incidents occurred in Ouaka and Mbomou Prefectures, with 57 per cent of casualties resulting from clashes between the Coalition and UPC, around Bambari, and anti-balaka activities in Mbomou Prefecture.

38. The number of verified cases of children affected by rape and other forms of sexual violence, some as young as 8 years of age, more than doubled (137 girls, 1 boy) compared to 2016. Among them were 48 girls who were victims of sexual violence during their association with armed groups. The main perpetrators were MPC (30), FPRC/MPC (18), anti-balaka elements (16) and FPRC (14). Additional allegations of sexual violence against boys were reported but remained unverified.

39. A total of 43 incidents of abduction were verified, affecting 35 girls and 66 boys, including infants. Most victims were abducted for recruitment purposes and four were subjected to sexual violence. Anti-balaka elements accounted for the highest number of abducted children (37), followed by LRA (20).

40. The United Nations verified 28 attacks against schools and 19 attacks against hospitals, including by anti-balaka (12), joint operations by FPRC/MPC[4] (9), UPC (7), FPRC (6), 3R, RJ (3 each), MPC (2), a self-defence group, MPC/RJ, the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique (MNLC), national security forces and an unidentified armed group (1 each). Among those incidents, 12 schools

[3] Coalition consisting of Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique/Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique/Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (FPRC/MPC/RPRC) and anti-balaka elements associated with local defence militias.

[4] Where joint operations of FPRC/MPC are indicated, cases could not be attributed to one specific group.

were damaged following long-term military use. Three additional cases of the military use of schools were attributed to UPC (2) and FPRC (1).

41. A total of 101 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, including the killing of 14 humanitarian staff. The highest number of incidents was attributed to anti-balaka elements (40), followed by MPC (10), FPRC (7) and unidentified ex-Séléka elements (6). For example, on 7 September, anti-balaka elements looted non-governmental organizations' bases and damaged vehicles, which resulted in the temporary suspension of humanitarian activities in Batangafo, affecting an estimated 28,000 internally displaced persons.

*Developments and concerns*

42. I welcome the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and urge the Government to ensure their swift implementation.

43. I take note of FPRC and UPC having issued command orders barring the recruitment of children, on 13 May and 27 September, respectively. Dialogue with armed groups also enabled the identification and separation of 1,816 children, including 371 girls (79 per cent from anti-balaka elements). In addition, 1,250 self-demobilized children (494 girls; 756 boys) from anti-balaka and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) were identified in three prefectures.

44. I am deeply concerned regarding the further documented increase of grave violations against children, including the increase in abductions attributed to anti-balaka elements. I urge armed groups to take immediate action and engage with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans.

45. The sexual exploitation and abuse of children by peacekeepers remained a serious protection concern (for more information, see the annexes to A/72/751 and A/72/751/Corr.1).

**Colombia**

46. The year 2017 was marked by the implementation of the peace agreement between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). The agreement ended a five-decade long conflict between these parties and presented a unique opportunity to enhance the protection of children. However, new dynamics of violence involving other armed groups emerged in areas vacated by FARC-EP, resulting in continued child protection challenges.

47. On 1 October 2017, a three-month temporary bilateral ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) entered into force. The commitment to suspend the enrolment of minors under the age of 15 into their ranks was one of the humanitarian measures agreed in parallel to the agreement.

*Grave violations*

48. A total of 57 incidents of the recruitment and use of children, affecting 169 children, were verified. ELN was the main perpetrator (113 children) followed by the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (also known as Clan del Golfo) (AGC) (35). Between September 2016 and August 2017, 135 children were formally released from FARC-EP ranks and no new cases of recruitment were documented in 2017. According to the Government, 285 children separated from armed groups entered a demobilization programme administered by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute.

49. The United Nations documented 46 incidents of killing and maiming, affecting 53 children, a sharp increase compared to 2016 (8 casualties). A total of 18 children were killed and 35 were maimed by shooting, crossfire and anti-personnel mines.

50. The United Nations verified four cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which were attributed to AGC (2), ELN (1) and Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (1). AGC elements threatened they would rape all girls aged 15 and above whom they meet in the streets and an AGC leader, who has since been killed, repeatedly sexually abused girls in the Department of Antioquia. At the time of writing, the case was under investigation by the Office of the Attorney General.

51. Three incidents of threats of attacks in May against protected medical personnel by unidentified armed groups were verified in Catatumbo region, Department of Norte de Santander, disrupting the functioning of health centres.

52. Three incidents of abduction, affecting nine children, were verified. Two incidents were attributed to ELN (six children) and one to AGC (three children).

53. Six incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified in the Departments of Chocó, Antioquia, Nariño and Boyacá. In November, ELN denied the Colombian Family Welfare Institute access to assist in the reintegration of children in Boyacá.

*Developments and concerns*

54. I am encouraged by the fact that, as postulated in the peace agreement, FARC-EP laid down its weapons and transformed itself into a political party, and commend the release of children, as provided for in the joint communiqué of May 2016 between the Government and the group. However, I remain concerned about reports of children who have been informally released and who fail to receive institutional support.

55. During her visits to Bogotá in November 2017 and May 2018, my Special Representative encouraged the Government to continue prioritizing the protection and reintegration of children and the prevention of violations. I welcome the efforts of the Government in this regard.

56. It is vital to continue strengthening institutions and programmes so as to ensure the effective reintegration of children and prevent new patterns of recruitment and use, particularly in areas with limited Government presence. I therefore encourage the Government to prioritize the implementation of the new recruitment prevention programme, known as "Mi futuro es hoy", which was established in collaboration with the United Nations and civil society partners.

57. I am concerned by the high number of cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular by ELN and AGC, and call on these groups to take immediate steps to end this practice. I welcome the Attorney General's ongoing investigations into cases of the recruitment and use of children by ELN and call upon the Government and ELN to include the issue of child protection in their peace talks.

58. The issue of sexual violence against children in conflict remains of great concern and I urge the Government to prioritize the prevention thereof and to ensure that perpetrators are swiftly held to account.

59. I strongly encourage the Government to continue its mine risk education activities. The risk to the civilian population is particularly acute in areas where new landmines have been planted and humanitarian demining has not started, such as in Riosucio, Department of Chocó.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo**

60. 2017 was a devastating year for children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The reporting period saw a further fragmentation of armed groups and shifting allegiances, both of which posed challenges for the protection of children.

61. In the east, children were most affected by Nyatura and Mai-Mai Mazembe activities in North Kivu, Raia Mutomboki in South Kivu and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) in Ituri. In the Kasais, Kamuina Nsapu recruited large numbers of children and destroyed an unprecedented number of schools. A large number of children allegedly associated with the militia were killed and maimed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo) (FARDC), during operations aimed at addressing the threat posed by Kamuina Nsapu. The mobilization of the Bana Mura militias to fight Kamuina Nsapu led to further violations against children in the Kasais. Violence in the region also led to the large-scale displacement of civilians.

*Grave violations*

62. The United Nations verified the new recruitment and use of 1,049 children (including 128 girls), 52 per cent of which occurred in North Kivu and 37 per cent in the Kasais; almost one third were under the age of 15 at the time of their recruitment. The main perpetrators were Kamuina Nsapu (370), Mai-Mai Mazembe (173), Nyatura (121), Raia Mutomboki and Mai-Mai Charles (62 each), FRPI (53), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (42), Mai-Mai Yakutumba (30) and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (22). The Congolese National Police recruited three boys in Haut-Katanga and South Kivu and three cases of the use of children were attributed to FARDC, including one girl for the purposes of sexual abuse and exploitation, and two boys, who were formerly associated with armed groups, as spies.

63. A total of 291 boys and 11 girls, some as young as 8 years of age, were detained by FARDC and the Congolese National Police for their alleged association with armed groups, for periods of detention ranging between one day and one year. At the time of reporting, the United Nations was continuing to advocate the release of two boys from Tshikapa prison, Kasai Province.

64. A total of 156 children were killed and 178 were maimed. The main perpetrators among the armed groups were Nyatura (33) and Kamuina Nsapu (31). FARDC was responsible for almost half of the total number of child casualties (154), 70 per cent of which occurred in the Kasais, and the Congolese National Police was responsible for 4.

65. Cases of rape and sexual violence against 179 girls and 2 boys were verified, mostly in North Kivu (64) and the Kasais (46). Two thirds of cases were attributed to armed groups, including Raia Mutomboki (25), Kamuina Nsapu (17), Bana Mura (15) and FRPI (14). FARDC was responsible for 44 cases and the Congolese National Police for 15.

66. From a total of 1,000 reported attacks, 396 attacks on schools and 119 attacks on hospitals were verified. Kamuina Nsapu perpetrated 395 such attacks, followed by Mai-Mai Mazembe (18). Thirteen cases were attributed to FARDC. The military use of 23 schools, for periods ranging from two days to one month, was perpetrated mainly by Mai-Mai Mazembe (11) and FARDC (6).

67. A total of 143 girls and 277 boys were abducted, mostly by Bana Mura (81), Kamuina Nsapu (72), Nyatura (60), Raia Mutomboki (40), Mai-Mai Mazembe (30) and FRPI (26). One girl was abducted by FARDC and sexually abused. At least 261

of those children were abducted for recruitment purposes and 50 were subjected to sexual violence. Between March and May, in Kamonia Territory, Kasai Province, Bana Mura militias abducted 49 girls and 15 boys, forced them to work on farms, and raped and sexually abused the girls. The United Nations continues its advocacy to secure the release of these children.

68. Eight incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified armed elements in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Kasai region. In addition, in the last quarter of 2017 alone, 17 humanitarian staff were abducted.

*Developments and concerns*

69. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I note the continued engagement of FARDC on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, which led to their delisting in 2017 (see A/72/361-S/2017/821, annex I). Important steps were taken in this regard through the training provided by the United Nations to national security forces as regards implementing the action plan and to military justice authorities on prosecuting the war crime of child recruitment. The Government continued to make progress in addressing sexual violence against children, including through disciplinary and accountability measures and by operating a nationwide helpline for victims, however more must be done. I urge the Government to redouble those efforts by urgently implementing all aspects pertaining to ending and preventing sexual violence by FARDC.

70. Furthermore, the United Nations identified 133 boys in FARDC recruitment centres during the screening of new recruits, and those boys were subsequently removed from the group of potential recruits. Awareness-raising efforts conducted by the United Nations and military pressure contributed to the separation of 371 girls and 2,089 boys, including from Kamuina Nsapu (656), Nyatura (300), Raia Mutomboki (258), Mai-Mai Mazembe (243), FDLR-FOCA (132), CRPI (108) and NDC-Rénové (95).

71. I welcome the progress made by military justice systems in holding the perpetrators of child recruitment and sexual violence accountable, with 16 armed group commanders awaiting trial and two recruiters of the Allied Democratic Forces convicted of child recruitment. I encourage the Government to ensure that Ntabo Ntaberi Cheka, who surrendered in July, is swiftly brought to trial, in accordance with due process standards, and that charges against him include all crimes he is alleged to have committed against children. I am concerned that two FARDC colonels, Colonel Ramazani and Colonel Kamulete, who are allegedly responsible for child recruitment, remain at large and encourage the Government to ensure accountability within the ranks of its security forces.

72. I am gravely concerned by the high number of children killed and maimed by national security forces, including through the disproportionate use of force, and by armed groups, notably Kamuina Nsapu, in the Kasais. I am also concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups or militia and urge the Government to treat those children primarily as victims, with the best interests of the child and other international protection standards as guiding principles.

73. I urge all parties to conflict to uphold their obligations under international law, put in place measures to mitigate the effects of armed conflict on children and ensure accountability, in close cooperation with the United Nations. I note with particular concern the high number of violations perpetrated by Kamuina Nsapu and the Bana Mura militias and call on those groups to immediately cease such actions.

## Iraq

74. Large-scale military operations led to the ousting of ISIL from Mosul, Tall Afar, Hawijah and Qa'im. In December, the Government of Iraq declared final victory over the group. The military operations led to a significant increase in violations against children. On 15 October, the federal Government deployed its forces to re-establish control in Kirkuk and other disputed areas that were previously under the control of Kurdish Peshmerga forces, as well as over border crossings. Since December 2016, the popular mobilization forces (PMF) are under the direct command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Iraqi armed forces.

*Grave violations*

75. The United Nations documented 523 cases of children recruited by parties to conflict, of which 109 cases (101 boys, 8 girls) were verified. Cases of recruitment involving 59 children, including 8 girls, were attributed to ISIL. Children were used as suicide bombers and combatants, for logistics and manufacturing explosive devices, and as wives for fighters. A total of 35 boys were recruited by unidentified armed groups, 9 by the Hêzên Parastina Gel/People's Defence Forces — the armed wing of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), 4 by the Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengalê/Sinjar Resistance Units, 1 by Hêza Parastina Êzîdxanê/Protection Force of Ezidkhan and 1 by Zeravani forces, part of the Peshmerga.

76. In 2017 at least 1,036 children (1,024 boys, 12 girls), including 345 in the Kurdistan Region, remained in juvenile detention facilities on national security-related charges, mostly for their alleged association with ISIL.

77. The killing and maiming of children remained the most prevalent violation, with 717 child casualties verified. Verified incidents resulted in 279 children being killed (143 boys, 84 girls, 52 sex unknown) and 438 children being maimed (270 boys, 143 girls, 25 sex unknown).

78. Of the total number of verified cases of killing and maiming, 424 were attributed to ISIL, 109 to Iraqi security forces (ISF) and the international counter-ISIL coalition, 34 to Peshmerga and 150 to unknown parties to the conflict. Over half of all incidents were the result of air strikes, shelling, sniper fire and rockets, resulting in 390 child casualties. Improvised explosive devices were the second leading cause (24 per cent), followed by targeted attacks on children (10 per cent), including three boys who were killed and two who were injured by unidentified parties for their alleged association with ISIL. The United Nations remains concerned about the continued targeting by ISIL of civilians fleeing areas of hostilities or of those who refuse to follow their "regulations", resulting in 79 child casualties.

79. Nine cases of sexual violence were verified. A 15-year-old boy was raped over three consecutive nights by an ISIL commander and one boy was sexually assaulted by an unidentified armed group. Six girls, aged 16 and 17, were forced to marry ISIL fighters in Hawijah and one 17-year-old Yazidi girl was sexually abused by ISIL members before being forced to manufacture bombs.

80. The United Nations documented 161 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals, of which 153 were verified (135 of these incidents date from previous years). In Ninawa, two schools were destroyed during air strikes and eight were hit by mortars launched by ISIL. Explosive devices were found near five schools and were believed to have been placed there by ISIL, in Ninawa and Salah al-Din. In Ninawa, one member of medical staff was killed and two hospitals were damaged during ISIL attacks.

81. The United Nations verified 22 reports of the military use of schools (21) and hospitals (1), including by ISIL (14), PMF (3), the federal police (2), ISF (2) and Peshmerga (1), in Ninawa, Kirkuk and Erbil. ISIL used schools and hospitals to store weapons and explosives or position fighters and snipers, while other parties mainly used such facilities as military bases and screening centres.

82. The United Nations verified the abduction of 32 children, all by ISIL (22 of these cases date from previous years). Seven abducted children were found dead in Anbar. A 7-year-old girl, who had been abducted in Mosul, was found by ISF with a person-borne improvised explosive device, walking among civilians. One boy and one girl, aged 17, were abducted from their homes when ISIL attacked their village in Kirkuk.

83. Three incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, all of which were perpetrated by ISIL. Cases included restrictions placed on supplies of medicine and clean water, in west Mosul, and the closure of checkpoints.

*Developments and concerns*

84. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I welcome the endorsement of the national child protection policy by the Government of Iraq, including a focus on the release and reintegration of children. I am also encouraged by the establishment of a high-level interministerial committee on monitoring and reporting, as endorsed by the Prime Minister in November, in order to better address grave violations against children in armed conflict, as well as the appointment of the National Security Adviser as focal point for the ongoing dialogue with the United Nations.

85. I remain deeply concerned over the number of verified violations committed against children, including cases of killing and maiming and the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular ISIL. I am also concerned by credible reports from south Iraq, specifically Najaf and Diwaniyah, in which groups under the umbrella of PMF organized military training for boys aged 15 and above. I encourage the Government to develop an action plan to end and prevent the alleged training, recruitment and use of children by PMF without delay.

86. Reports of children held in detention for their alleged association with ISIL remain a concern. I urge the Government to treat all children formerly associated with armed groups primarily as victims, in line with international juvenile justice principles, and to use detention only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time. In this regard, the United Nations stands ready to support the Government in developing and implementing reintegration services for children formerly associated with armed groups.

**Israel and State of Palestine**

87. Throughout 2017, the security and political situation remained tense. A large number of documented incidents occurred in July and December following demonstrations and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

*Grave violations*

88. A large number of children continued to be arrested and detained by Israeli forces for alleged security offences. According to prison data provided by Israel Prison Service based on a request under the Freedom of Information Law, between January and December, a monthly average of 312 Palestinian children were held in detention. At the end of December, among at least 352 children detained, 244 were

being held in pretrial detention and/or during trial. The United Nations obtained affidavits from 162 Palestinian boys between the ages of 12 and 17 who had been detained by Israeli forces, in which they stated that they had been subjected to ill-treatment and breaches of due process. The United Nations also documented five cases of children held in administrative detention in 2017.

89. In 2017, 15 Palestinian children (including two girls) were killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. Among those children, five (two girls, three boys) aged between 15 and 17 were killed in the context of stabbing or presumed stabbing attacks in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Two children were killed in shelling incidents and seven children were killed by live ammunition in clashes in Gaza and the West Bank. All of the casualties were attributed to the Israeli forces.

90. A number of cases raise concerns regarding the excessive use of force by Israeli forces. In one instance, on 21 July, Israeli forces responded to a group of young men and boys throwing stones in Abu Dis, East Jerusalem, with excessive use of force, shooting a 17-year-old boy. There were also worrisome calls by Palestinian political actors for the participation of youth in stone-throwing against Israelis.

91. A total of 1,160 Palestinian children (including 39 girls) were injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza: 809 were injured by Israeli forces during clashes and demonstrations; 317 during military operations, including search and arrest operations; and 3 Palestinian boys, aged between 15 and 17, in presumed stabbing attempts against Israeli forces.

92. In addition, seven Palestinian children were injured after being hit by stones or physically assaulted in Hebron, Nablus and East Jerusalem, reportedly by Israeli settlers.

93. Five Israeli children were injured by Palestinians in East Jerusalem (three), Hebron (one) and Ramallah (one) when their vehicles were hit by stones or Molotov cocktails. One 12-year-old Israeli boy reportedly suffered head injuries after being hit with a stone by a Palestinian in Hebron.

94. Six schools in Gaza and Israel sustained damage in the reporting period. Four schools suffered minor damage in Gaza in the context of Israeli air strikes, reportedly in response to projectiles launched by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza. In addition, one school in Gaza and one kindergarten in Sderot, Israel, sustained minor damage as a result of rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups. In addition, the United Nations documented 164 incidents of disruption of access to education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

95. The United Nations uncovered two tunnels used by armed elements running under three United Nations-run schools in Gaza in June and October, posing a potential threat to the lives of Palestinian children and United Nations staff.

96. The United Nations documented six incidents of incursions or clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians in or around health facilities, affecting children in the West Bank. An increasing percentage of applications by children to cross the Erez checkpoint out of Gaza for medical treatment were delayed in 2017 (32 per cent, against 26 per cent in 2016), which affected 2,420 children (including 988 girls).

*Developments and concerns*

97. I am extremely concerned regarding the ongoing violence against children in Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international law to protect children from all forms of violence, to refrain from the excessive use of force and from encouraging their

participation in violent demonstrations and to engage constructively with the United Nations to prevent future violations. I also reiterate my call upon the Government of Israel to draw on international juvenile justice principles, reconsider the use of administrative detention for children, refrain from the use of solitary confinement or from encouraging children to act as informants, ensure that detention is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time, and to prioritize alternatives to detention.

**Lebanon**

98. Children continue to be affected by clashes and explosive devices in the north Biqa' Valley and the Ein El Helweh Palestine refugee camp, by unexploded ordnance in the south and sporadic violence in border areas.

*Grave violations*

99. In Lebanon, the United Nations continued to document the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, including three verified cases of boys recruited by ISIL in and around Tripoli for trafficking into the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, three alleged cases of recruitment from Lebanon into the Syrian Arab Republic by Hizbullah were reported, as well as the use of children by armed factions and groups for fighting in Ein El Helweh Palestine refugee camp.

100. The number of children in pretrial detention under military jurisdiction on charges relating to terrorism or national security, following their alleged association with armed groups in Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic increased: 53 boys allegedly associated with ISIL were arrested during the reporting period. Of these, 29 were released and 24 remained in detention as at December, along with 9 children detained before 2017 for their association the Nusrah Front-led Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (also known as Levant Liberation Organization).

101. In a marked increase from 2016 (8 child casualties), the United Nations verified 20 child casualties (8 killed, 12 wounded). Violations were most prevalent in Arsal and Ein El Helweh camp.

102. A United Nations school for Palestinian refugees and a centre run by a non-governmental organization sustained major damages during violence between Palestinian armed factions in Ein El Helweh in February.

103. Escalations of armed violence in Ein El Helweh and one isolated incident in the Beddawi Palestine refugee camp disrupted the delivery of education and health services for extensive periods. Military operations in Arsal in July forced at least two non-governmental organizations to suspend critical services for children.

*Developments and concerns*

104. I am concerned by the increasing number of verified cases of child casualties in Lebanon as well as by reports of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, and reiterate my call on the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Children associated with parties to conflict must be treated primarily as victims and given reintegration assistance. I also call upon the Government to ensure that detention is used only as a measure of last resort, for the shortest period of time and to consider alternatives to detention of children formerly associated with armed groups whenever possible. I further call upon armed groups to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children.

**Libya**

105. Conflict continued throughout Libya, with numerous armed groups engaging in intermittent hostilities while fighting for control of territory. Owing to the level of insecurity, most United Nations staff remained located outside of the country, which restricted the ability to monitor violations.

*Grave violations*

106. Limited information is available regarding the recruitment and use of children by armed elements. However, cases of the use of children by armed groups continued to be reported. For instance, in October, 125 adolescents formerly associated with armed groups in the Zintan Municipality were released.

107. Children were deprived of their liberty by parties to the conflict and used in prisoner exchanges. In the context of fighting between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) armed group in the oil crescent area, LNA and affiliated forces arrested and detained children for up to seven weeks for their alleged association with PFG. This included boys aged as young as 10.

108. At least 40 children were killed and 38 children injured by air strikes, shelling, small arms fire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. For example, in January, four children were killed in an air strike conducted by LNA in Ganfouda neighbourhood, Benghazi. In June, in Sabha, a 13-year-old girl and a 3-year-old boy were caught in crossfire and injured during an armed clash between gunmen loyal to Qadhadhfa and Tebu armed tribal forces. In October, six boys and three girls were killed, and four children were injured, during air strikes in the rural areas of Fata'ih and Arqam near Darnah. The attacks occurred in areas contested by LNA and affiliated forces and the Darnah Mujahidin Shura Council.

109. The United Nations documented incidents that affected displaced persons and migrants, including children, who were deprived of their liberty, raped or subjected to prostitution or other forms of sexual violence by individuals believed to be associated with armed groups or affiliated with State actors.

110. The United Nations documented two incidents of children injured by stray bullets while attending school. The source of fire could not be verified. In addition, 18 attacks against hospitals and medical personnel were verified. For example, in March, one LNA air strike hit a medical centre, killing two civilians. In September, in the context of fighting between armed groups, the University Hospital in Sabratah in western Libya was partially damaged by shelling. Incidents of abduction and detention of medical personnel were also documented, including by LNA and the Special Deterrence Force.

111. The United Nations continued to document incidents of denials of humanitarian access, including attacks on humanitarian actors. Incidents included the detention of four humanitarian staff at the Mitiga airport and an attack on a United Nations convoy by an unknown armed group in Zawiyah.

*Developments and concerns*

112. I welcome the cooperation of authorities and commanders in releasing children associated with armed actors in Zintan Municipality and strongly encourage other armed groups to take similar steps. I am gravely concerned by reports of sexual violence and other violations committed against children in Libya, including the recruitment, use and trafficking of children, and urge the Government of National Accord to take action to address this issue without delay.

## Mali

113. The situation in northern Mali was marked by clashes between armed groups that were signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, of 2015 (the Platform coalition of armed groups and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA)), which ended following the signing, on 20 September 2017, of the cessation of hostilities agreement. In contrast, in the northern and central regions, attacks by non-signatory armed groups against national and international forces increased.

*Grave violations*

114. A total of 159 cases of child recruitment and use were verified (157 boys, 2 girls), including 114 cases that occurred in previous years but were documented in 2017. Cases were attributed to CMA (47) (including to the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (21) and the Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (18)); the Platform (73) (including to the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (29) and the self-defence groups Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy (20 each)); Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (12); Ansar Eddine (9); Al Mourabitoun (3); Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest and Front de libération du Macina (1 each); and to unidentified armed groups (13).

115. During the reporting period, 23 boys who had been detained by the Government for their alleged association with armed groups were released, including 3 boys who were convicted as adults and released after having served their sentences. The United Nations continued its advocacy with the national authorities, in line with the Protocol on the Release and Handover of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups signed in 2013, to ensure the release of three other boys who were still in detention. In separate incidents, 10 boys associated with GATIA (9) and CMA (1) were deprived of their liberty by CMA and GATIA, respectively, and released following United Nations advocacy.

116. The United Nations verified the killing (19) and maiming (15) of 34 children resulting from crossfire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. One girl died after being raped. The majority of casualties occurred in Gao (36 per cent) and Kidal (25 per cent) Regions.

117. Nine incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence were verified, affecting 13 girls aged between 12 and 17. Cases were attributed to the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance II (CMFPR-II) (5); the Malian armed forces (3); MSA (1); and unidentified elements (4). A formal judicial process was initiated in two cases (against CMFPR-II and unidentified elements).

118. A total of 41 attacks on schools and 9 attacks against hospitals were verified in central and northern Mali, all of which remain unattributed. For instance, in September, unidentified armed elements attacked an ambulance belonging to an international non-governmental organization in Tassiga, Gao Region, firing at the vehicle and injuring a midwife. Attacks and threats against educational staff, students and parents were prevalent, particularly in Mopti Region, which accounted for 21 incidents. In addition, 12 schools were used for military purposes by armed groups, including at least four by CMA and two by the Platform. As at December, 657 schools remained closed in conflict-affected regions.

119. Two incidents of abduction, affecting three boys and one girl, were verified. For instance, in April, a 12-year-old girl, who was allegedly accompanied by an unspecified number of other girls, was abducted and raped by unidentified armed elements in Mopti Region.

120. The United Nations verified 132 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including carjacking and the killing and kidnapping of humanitarian workers. Increasing criminality also undermined humanitarian response efforts. Most incidents occurred in Gao (35) and Kidal (31) Regions. All cases remain unattributed. At least seven organizations providing care to children were affected and at least 10 non-governmental organizations were compelled to temporarily suspend their humanitarian programmes.

*Developments and concerns*

121. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** Following the signature by CMA of an action plan with the United Nations in March to end and prevent grave violations against children, the group identified focal points and priority activities, including the screening of troops to identify associated children. I welcome these steps but remain concerned regarding incidents of child recruitment and use. I urge CMA to implement the action plan without delay.

122. In a positive development, on 1 February 2018, the Government endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, aimed at protecting education facilities from military use during conflict. I encourage the Government to finalize the development of a plan of action to implement the declaration without delay.

123. I am gravely concerned about the continuing high numbers of children recruited and used by the Platform, in particular by GATIA, and urge its leadership to take immediate action and engage with the United Nations to release children and end this practice.

**Myanmar**

124. While the national peace process between the Government of Myanmar and several armed groups continued, long-standing conflicts in Kachin and Shan States persisted. In addition, on 25 August, armed attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against Myanmar police posts in northern Rakhine State triggered an immediate response from Myanmar Armed Forces, including the Border Guard Police and Tatmadaw, affecting primarily the Rohingya community. Following the Government's response, a situation of lawlessness ensued, which further compounded the vulnerability of civilians. In all these regions, the security situation remains volatile and grave violations against children continue to be documented.

125. With respect to the situation in Rakhine State, given that the majority of the affected population fled to Bangladesh, a specialized team of monitors was dispatched to camps in the border area to undertake monitoring and verification of alleged violations against children. Information from this monitoring mission is presented in paragraphs 135 to 137 below.

*Grave violations*

126. In 2017, the United Nations documented 438 cases of the recruitment and use of children, 38 of which were verified. Among those cases, 285 date from previous years.

127. The vast majority of documented cases were attributed to the Tatmadaw, including 166 cases of formal recruitment of children (as young as 13) and the informal or temporary use of about 200 children, mainly for maintenance or cleaning duties.

128. The United Nations verified 39 cases of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups were verified, 35 of which were attributed to the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and four cases to the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

129. The United Nations verified the detention of three boys for alleged association with armed groups and one for alleged "desertion" from the Tatmadaw. In addition, five cases of the military detention of suspected minors (recruited before turning 18) by the Myanmar Armed Forces for alleged "desertion" were documented. After the Myanmar Armed Forces were notified, the suspected minors were sent back to their regiment and placed on light duty, pending verification of their age.

130. The United Nations verified 29 incidents of the killing and maiming of children, involving 47 children (36 boys, 11 girls) in Kachin and Shan States. Landmines and explosive remnants of war continued to be the primary causes of child casualties in those two states (21 incidents), while eight crossfire incidents were attributed jointly to the Tatmadaw and armed groups.

131. The United Nations verified three cases of sexual violence committed against four girls aged as young as 7. Cases were attributed to the Tatmadaw, KIA and a people's militia in Shan State (one each). In one incident, a Tatmadaw soldier was court-martialled, sentenced to one year of imprisonment and permanently dismissed from the Tatmadaw.

132. A total of 15 attacks on schools were documented during the reporting period. Incidents included damage to a school owing to an armed clash between Tatmadaw and TNLA elements, and attacks on school personnel by TNLA, including the rape of a middle school director in Kyaukme township, Shan State.

133. The United Nations documented 12 incidents of child abduction (14 boys, 3 girls). 10 incidents were attributed to KIA, mainly for the purposes of the recruitment and use of children, while one incident each was attributed to the Tatmadaw and TNLA. Most of the children affected were released after a few days or weeks.

134. Access for humanitarian organizations, particularly in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States, further deteriorated in 2017, affecting displaced people and other affected civilians in need of humanitarian assistance. Since April 2016, international humanitarian organizations have been refused permission by the Government to distribute food or other relief supplies in areas beyond Government control. Internally displaced persons located in those areas were instructed to travel to designated distribution points in Government-controlled areas in order to collect relief supplies.

*Grave violations in northern Rakhine State*

135. The United Nations verified the use of 53 boys in northern Rakhine State, largely by the Border Guard Police (47 boys), including for camp maintenance, construction and the carrying of equipment. Information on the recruitment and use by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army of boys, aged as young as 10, was also documented and one case was verified. The fear of reprisals by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against refugees in Bangladesh for sharing information on the violations perpetrated by the group may have impeded a more complete documentation of such incidents.

136. The United Nations verified the killing (196) and maiming (24) of 220 children (133 boys, 51 girls, 36 sex unknown). All those child casualties occurred during operations by the Border Guard Police and Tatmadaw across 28 villages in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships in response to attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.

137. The United Nations documented 41 cases of rape by the Tatmadaw, including the gang rape of girls as young as 10. Ten cases were verified, including that of a 14-year-old girl in Maungdaw township, who was seized and gang-raped by two Tatmadaw soldiers before being killed in front of her mother and three siblings.

*Developments and concerns*

138. I recognize the progress of the Government on the implementation of its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Myanmar Armed Forces, including through the release of 49 children from the Tatmadaw in 2017, the continued provision of access for monitoring and monthly meetings with the United Nations for joint case reviews of alleged underage recruits. I call on the Government to build on these achievements in order to reinvigorate its road map towards compliance by further accelerating the verification and release of children, ensuring that civilian and military perpetrators of child recruitment are held to account and bringing to a halt the informal association of children with its forces. Children formerly associated with armed forces or groups should be seen primarily as victims, treated in line with international juvenile justice principles and their swift release and reintegration should be prioritized whenever possible.

139. My Special Representative visited Myanmar in May 2018 and held constructive discussions with the Government, including on the speedy completion of the existing action plan, the expeditious passage of the draft child law, the inclusion of child protection issues in the ongoing peace dialogue and on the question of permission to enter Rakhine State to document violations. The Government made a commitment to prioritize these issues.

140. I commend the Kachin Independence Army, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and the Shan State Army for their engagement with the United Nations on child protection and their commitment to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, and reiterate my call on the Government to facilitate the signature and implementation of action plans with listed armed groups, as suggested by my Special Representative during her latest country visit.

141. I am concerned by the verified recruitment and use of children in northern Rakhine State and credible reports of the killing and maiming of children in a large-scale massacre of Hindus in Maungdaw township on 27 August, allegedly by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army elements. I underline the need for intensified monitoring and verification of grave violations perpetrated by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, in particular in Rakhine State, and call upon the group to take immediate action to end and prevent such violations and to refrain from issuing threats to potential witnesses of grave violations against children.

142. I am furthermore deeply concerned about the grave violations against children in northern Rakhine State following the August 2017 attacks, in particular cases of the killing, maiming and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, and strongly urge the Government of Myanmar to immediately allow unimpeded access for child protection actors to conflict-affected areas, including Rakhine State, and to conduct transparent investigations into the allegations of grave violations against children and ensure support services for survivors and returnees, as discussed with my Special Representative.

**Somalia**

143. The security situation in Somalia remained highly volatile, with continued Al-Shabaab attacks on Somali security forces, government officials and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The Somali National Army, AMISOM and military forces of Ethiopia and Kenya conducted military operations against Al-Shabaab, and the United States of America intensified air strikes against the group.

*Grave violations*

144. A total of 2,087 boys and 40 girls were recruited and used. Recruitment of children by Al-Shabaab significantly increased (1,770) compared to 2016, especially after the group forced teachers to adopt a new curriculum. Al-Shabaab used detention, violence and threats to force family members, teachers and elders to hand over their children, causing families to flee or to send their children, often unaccompanied, out of areas controlled by Al-Shabaab, in order to ensure their protection. Children were also recruited by the Somali National Army (119), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (66), unidentified clan militias (58), Galmudug forces (40), Jubbaland forces (40), Southwest forces (21) and the Somali Police Force (11).

145. The detention of children for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab remained concerning, with children detained mainly by the Somali National Army (156), the Somali Police Force (37), Jubbaland forces (10), Southwest forces (7) and AMISOM (7).

146. A total of 931 children were killed and maimed by unknown armed elements (477), Al-Shabaab (208), the Somali National Army (88), unidentified clan militias (65), Southwest forces (26), AMISOM (21), Jubbaland forces (18), the Somali Police Force (10), Puntland armed forces (7), Kenyan Defence Forces (6), Galmudug forces (4) and Ethiopian Liyu Police (1). Most child casualties resulted from crossfire during military operations, mortar shelling, improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and air strikes. Al-Shabaab also publicly executed children.

147. The United Nations verified incidents of sexual violence affecting 330 girls and 1 boy, attributed to unknown armed elements (125), Al-Shabaab (75), the Somali National Army (37), Jubbaland forces (28), Southwest forces (26), unidentified clan militias (19), Ethiopian Liyu Police (10), Galmudug forces (5), Puntland armed forces (3), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a, Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the Somali Police Force (1 each). Rape often occurred in camps for internally displaced persons or when girls collected firewood or water.

148. Attacks on 64 schools were verified, 58 of which were attributed to Al-Shabaab. Cases included the detention of teachers for refusing to adopt Al-Shabaab's curriculum or school closures. For instance, on 24 February, Al-Shabaab closed a madrasa in Ceel Garas town, Galguduud Region, and arrested the teacher, who had declined to refer his students for military training. Of 10 verified attacks on hospitals, 6 were attributed to Al-Shabaab.

149. Abductions almost doubled compared to 2016: 1,634 children were abducted, 98 per cent of them by Al-Shabaab (1,608). Abductees as young as 9 were sent to Al-Shabaab madrasas or training camps. In July and August alone, 550 children were abducted in Ceel Buur district and taken to the Ali Jim'ale centre run by Al-Shabaab in Ceel Buur town, Galguduud Region.

150. Incidents of denial of humanitarian access were mainly attributed to Al-Shabaab (26), unidentified clan militias (9) and the Somali National Army (2).

*Developments and concerns*

151. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** The Child Protection Unit of the Ministry of Defence screened and sensitized 1,569 integrated Somali National Army soldiers, 700 members of the Darwish force and 235 members of the Southwest forces, with United Nations support. Sustained United Nations engagement with the National Intelligence and Security Agency resulted in the handover of 36 boys to child protection actors. In August, the Chief of Defence Forces

issued a General Command Order to protect children from armed conflict. In November, the drafting process for a child rights bill was launched. I welcome these steps and call on the Government to swiftly implement its action plans.

152. A group of 40 children detained in Puntland since 2016 over their association with Al-Shabaab was placed in a reintegration centre in Garowe. The prison sentences of 28 of the children were reduced to 10 years. While I welcome their handover, I am concerned about the lengthy prison sentences and call upon the President of Puntland to grant a presidential pardon and accelerate the children's transfer to reintegration centres closer to their areas of origin. I further call on Puntland authorities to harmonize its legislations with federal laws and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

153. I am extremely concerned by the surge in the number of violations against children, including the increase in the number of cases of the recruitment and use of children and of sexual violence perpetrated against them attributed to Jubbaland, Southwest and Galmudug forces; the increase in the number of Al-Shabaab recruitment campaigns, attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions; as well as the increase in the number of air strikes by unidentified perpetrators targeting Al-Shabaab training camps holding children. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all violations and abide by their obligations under international law.

154. I remain concerned by the detention of children for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab and call on authorities to treat those children primarily as victims, with the best interests of the child and international protection standards as guiding principles.

**South Sudan**

155. Fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its allies against the pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) continued and spread to the Greater Upper Nile region. Violations against children by all parties to the conflict increased, with the highest number of incidents documented in the Greater Equatoria region, followed by the Greater Upper Nile region. Owing to insecurity and access restrictions, many incidents could not be verified.

*Grave violations*

156. The United Nations verified 140 incidents of the recruitment and use of children, which affected 1,221 children, including 164 girls. They were attributed to pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (459 children), followed by the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) (405), SPLA (254), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (60), the South Sudan Democratic Army-Cobra Faction (SSDA-CF) (42) and the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) (1). Children were most affected in Unity but were observed throughout the country wearing military uniforms, manning checkpoints, being used as porters or bodyguards and carrying weapons.

157. The United Nations verified 54 incidents of killing (36 children) and maiming (57 children). The majority of casualties were attributed to SPLA (38 children) and pro-Machar SPLA-IO (6). Children continued to be affected by unexploded ordnance (38 child casualties).

158. The United Nations verified incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting 55 girls, including 13 girls who were gang-raped. The majority of cases were verified in Central Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria and attributed to SPLA (47 girls) followed by pro-Machar SPLA-IO (3), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (2), SSNPS, South Sudan National Wildlife Service and SSNLM (1 each). Girls were most frequently

affected during military operations carried out by SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA-IO, as well as at checkpoints.

159. Attacks on 26 schools and 24 hospitals were verified. Cases were attributed to SPLA (33), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (5), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (2) and the South Sudan People's Patriotic Front (SSPPF) (1). Nine cases resulted from crossfire incidents between SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA-IO. In April, schools and health facilities in Eastern Equatoria were particularly affected following SPLA military offensives in and around Pajok, Magwe County (17 attacks).

160. In addition, 22 schools and two hospitals were used for military purposes. Cases were mainly attributed to SPLA (18), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (2), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (2) and SSNPS (1). All 22 schools continued to be used for military purposes at the time of writing.

161. A total of 12 incidents of abduction, which affected 29 children, including 9 girls, were verified. Cases were attributed to SPLA (20 children), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (6) and pro-Machar SPLA-IO (3). Children continued to be abducted for recruitment purposes. For instance, in Unity, in August, three boys, aged between 14 and 15, were abducted by SPLA soldiers on their way back to a United Nations protection of civilians site in Bentiu, before being rescued by United Nations peacekeepers.

162. A total of 783 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, a significant increase from 2016. Incidents were attributed to national authorities and institutions (400), SPLA (189), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (104), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (10), the White Army and SSPPF (3 each). Incidents involved attacks on humanitarian personnel and the looting of warehouses and humanitarian assets, as well as bureaucratic impediments. For instance, in March, six humanitarian workers on their way to Jonglei to implement child protection activities for children released from SSDA-CF were killed in Central Equatoria.

*Developments and concerns*

163. Within the framework of the action plan signed with SPLA on the recruitment and use of children, the South Sudan National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission carried out two training-of-trainers sessions on child protection, with the support of the United Nations, for a total of 70 SPLA officers. The officers subsequently facilitated internal training programmes initiated by SPLA.

164. The United Nations and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission conducted several advocacy campaigns for the release of children associated with armed groups. In August, during an age-assessment exercise in Pibor, Jonglei, 313 boys were found to be associated with pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO. Between October and December, an age assessment by the United Nations and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission in Yambio, Western Equatoria, identified 426 children associated with SSNLM and 44 children associated with pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO. In the first four months of 2018, 518 children, including 182 girls, were released in a first phase by SSNLM and pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO.

165. In November, in a meeting with the United Nations, the First Vice-President, Taban Deng Gai, acknowledged the presence of children in the ranks of his troops, reaffirmed his support for their release and subsequently nominated a child protection focal point.

166. While I take note of the above-mentioned steps, the scale of violations affecting children in South Sudan and the level of impunity for perpetrators remain alarming. I remind parties to conflict that all children recruited and used must be released and

handed over to civilian child protection actors, in line with the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict, the 2017 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and the action plans signed with the United Nations. I call on the Government to ensure accountability for violations and urge all parties to conflict to abide by their obligations to protect children.

167. Furthermore, I am extremely concerned about the increase in the number of attacks on schools and hospitals, particularly by Government forces, and urge the Government to end such attacks immediately.

**The Sudan**

168. Clashes between the Government and armed groups in Darfur decreased significantly, although an unsuccessful attempt was made by the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) and allied forces to reassert their presence in North and East Darfur in May, and the arms collection campaign by the Government spurred clashes with Musa Hilal and allied forces in October. The activities of the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) remained limited to pockets of West Jebel Marra. While the situation in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei was relatively stable, divisions within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) reportedly resulted in ethnic clashes. Throughout the year, unilateral ceasefires were extended in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

*Grave violations: Darfur*

169. The United Nations documented the recruitment and use of 24 children, of which one case, involving the recruitment of a 14-year-old boy by SLA/AW, was verified. In addition, 22 children were detained by the Government for their alleged association with armed groups, for periods lasting between three weeks and five months. All children have been released from detention.

170. A total of 94 incidents of killing (19) and maiming (75), affecting 146 children, were verified (116 boys, 30 girls), which reflected a decrease from the 199 children killed or maimed in 2016. Child casualties resulted from shooting (75), unexploded ordnance (66), aerial bombardment (3) and physical assault (2). Incidents were attributed to unidentified armed elements (33), Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (4), Sudan Police (3), Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) (3), tribal clashes (2) and one each to SLA/AW, the Popular Defence Forces and the joint Chad-Sudan border monitoring force. Almost half of all the incidents (46) were caused by unexploded ordnance and could not be attributed.

171. The United Nations verified 36 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which affected 44 girls, aged between 6 and 17. Cases were attributed to unidentified armed elements (38), SAF (3), RSF (1), Sudan Police (1), and Sudan Liberation Army/Peace and Development (SLA/PD) (1). Of the 36 incidents, to date, 3 have resulted in a conviction.

172. A total of eight attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (4) were verified and attributed to unidentified armed elements (5), RSF (2) and SLA/PD (1). Attacks on schools and hospitals involved the abduction and rape of two teachers, physical damage to schools and the looting of medical material. In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of four schools by RSF (3) and SAF (1). The school used by SAF in Laiba, East Jebel Marra, remained occupied at the time of writing.

173. Nine incidents of abduction, affecting 10 boys and 3 girls, were verified, all of which were attributed to unidentified armed elements.

174. The United Nations verified one incident of denial of humanitarian access. In Kutum, North Darfur, a vehicle transporting medicine was prevented from passing by

unidentified armed elements. Restrictions on movement and bureaucratic constraints imposed by the Government on the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations delivering aid to vulnerable populations, particularly in East Jebel Marra, continued to affect the delivery of humanitarian aid to children.

*Grave violations: South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*

175. While no cases of child recruitment and use could be verified, the United Nations received allegations of the recruitment of boys by a splinter group of SPLM-N in Kurmuk, Blue Nile, prior to the group's integration into SAF.

176. The killing (10) and maiming (6) of 16 boys was verified and attributed to unidentified armed elements (10) and SPLM-N (1). Three child casualties resulted from unexploded ordnance and two occurred during clashes and could not be attributed. Five incidents took place in South Kordofan and one in Abyei.

177. No attacks on schools and hospitals were verified. However, in May, SAF used three schools formerly held by SPLM-N in Kurmuk, Blue Nile, and one hospital in Jurt West village, Blue Nile, for military purposes.

178. Access restrictions imposed by SPLM-N continued to affect the delivery of humanitarian aid to children.

*Developments and concerns*

179. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** During her visit to the Sudan from 25 February to 1 March 2018, my Special Representative witnessed commendable progress in the implementation of the Government's action plan and the initiation of a process of building on the action plan so as to create a national plan of prevention of violations against children. In this regard, I welcome the impact of measures taken by the high-level and technical committees at the national and state levels to improve the protection of children, including the adoption of the standard operating procedures on the release and handover of children associated with armed groups and the complaint mechanism manual to report child recruitment. I am encouraged by the access provided for joint United Nations-Government monitoring and verification missions to barracks and training centres of the armed forces, the issuance of command orders and directives to all Government forces to prevent child recruitment and the release of all children previously detained. There have been no verified reports of the recruitment and use of children by the Government of the Sudan since 2015. Furthermore, I welcome efforts by the Government to demilitarize schools and hospitals and the initiation of an awareness-raising campaign to prevent violations against children.

180. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I welcome the continued engagement by SPLM-N on its action plan, including the establishment of an action plan committee and the issuance of a command order prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, and call on the group to provide access for the United Nations to areas under its control.

181. I welcome the respective command orders issued by SLA/MM and the Justice and Equality Movement and urge both parties to expedite their implementation plans to end and prevent child recruitment, in particular by facilitating verification missions by the United Nations.

**Syrian Arab Republic**

182. A high intensity of conflict continued across the Syrian Arab Republic in 2017, resulting in the highest number of verified grave violations against children (2,896)

ever recorded in the country. Civilians trapped in densely populated besieged areas, mainly by Government forces, continued to be the worst affected.

*Grave violations*

183. Verified cases of the recruitment and use of children increased by 13 per cent compared to 2016, with 961 cases (872 boys, 89 girls) verified. Ninety per cent of the children served in combat roles (861) and 26 per cent (254) were below the age of 15. Of the total number of verified cases, 36 children were of foreign origin and at least 16 were killed in combat.

184. Verified cases were attributed to ISIL (284); groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) (244); People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (224); Government forces and pro-government militias (73); Ahrar al-Sham (53); Nusrah Front-led Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (41); Army of Islam (also known as Jaysh al-Islam) (37); and unidentified armed groups (five).

185. Verified cases of the recruitment and use of children by ISIL, including a 4-year-old child, more than doubled in 2017. The recruitment and use of children by YPG/YPJ increased almost fivefold (from 46 to 224) compared to 2016. Nearly one third of the verified cases of children recruited by the group were girls (72) and 16 per cent were of Arab origin. Groups self-affiliated with the FSA were responsible for a quarter of all verified cases. Over 70 per cent of verified cases occurred in Aleppo, Hama and Idlib Governorates. In relation to children recruited by Government forces and pro-government militias, some received military training, including outside of the country when children of foreign origin were associated with pro-government militia, and were found carrying military intelligence identification cards.

186. Children continued to be arrested and detained for their alleged association with armed groups. The arrest and detention of 72 children by Government forces (46 boys, 26 girls; some aged as young as 10) for their alleged association with armed groups, was verified. At least 38 of these children were ill-treated, tortured and/or raped during their detention.

187. Six boys, as young as 12, were deprived of their liberty for alleged association with opposing parties. Four cases were attributed to groups self-affiliated with FSA, one to ISIL and one to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. In the context of the advances made on ISIL-held areas during the second half of 2017, at least 166 children were deprived of their liberty by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) for their alleged affiliation with ISIL. ISIL also deprived 27 children of their liberty as punishment for a wide range of acts it classifies as crimes.

188. The United Nations verified the killing (910) and maiming (361) of 1,271 children. Cases were attributed to Government and pro-government forces (586 cases, of which 404 were aerial attacks); ISIL (150); the international counter-ISIL coalition (43); YPG/YPJ (29); groups self-affiliated with FSA (9); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (3); Ahrar al-Sham (1); and unidentified perpetrators (450). Most of the verified cases were as a result of air strikes (734), followed by shelling (191) and improvised explosive devices (133). In one incident, in April, aerial attacks struck a residential area north of Khan Shaykhun, Idlib, killing 35 children and injuring 23.

189. The United Nations verified 24 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence (23 girls, 1 boy). Cases included gang rape, forced marriage to armed group fighters, trafficking and sexual enslavement. Of the 24 cases, 18 were attributed to ISIL, 4 to Government forces and 2 to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham.

190. The United Nations verified 67 attacks on schools and education personnel. Incidents were attributed to Government and pro-government forces (44), the

international counter-ISIL coalition (4), ISIL (3) and groups self-affiliated with the FSA (2). The majority of attacks were a result of air strikes (47).

191. The United Nations verified 108 attacks on hospitals and medical personnel, resulting in the killing of 6 and injuring of at least 29 medical personnel. Attacks were attributed to Government forces (13); pro-government forces (67); groups self-affiliated with FSA (4); the international counter-ISIL coalition (4); ISIL (2); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1). Most of the attacks resulted from air strikes (81).

192. Schools were frequently used for military purposes, with 22 verified incidents attributed to ISIL (20) and YPG/YPJ (2). Of these, 16 schools were subsequently attacked. In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of 10 hospitals by ISIL, among which 8 were subsequently attacked. Schools and hospitals served as training grounds, ammunition depots, detention facilities, accommodations and military bases.

193. The United Nations verified the abduction of 57 children (23 boys, 20 girls, 14 sex unknown), which were attributed to Government forces (20), YPG/YPJ (6), ISIL (6) and unidentified armed groups (25). The alleged affiliation of relatives with opposing armed forces or groups was the primary reason for abduction. Six children were abducted for the purpose of forced recruitment by YPG/YPJ (3) and ISIL (3).

194. In 2017, the escalation of violence in eastern Ghutah and Rural Damascus led to a rapid deterioration of living conditions for around 400,000 persons trapped inside the government-besieged enclave, including a high number of children.

195. The United Nations verified 105 cases of denial of humanitarian access, including 52 cases involving attacks on humanitarian facilities and personnel and 53 cases of the removal or blocking of humanitarian supplies. The main perpetrators included Government forces (36); air strikes by Government or pro-government forces (19); ISIL (6); YPG/YPJ (4); and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (3). Attacks on humanitarian personnel resulted in the killing (21) and injury (35) of 56 persons.

*Developments and concerns*

196. I am deeply concerned about the continuing high numbers of verified violations, including the killing and maiming of children and the increase in child recruitment and use, and urge all parties to the conflict to put in place measures to end and prevent these violations.

197. I acknowledge the formation of a national committee to prevent and respond to underage recruitment by armed groups in March 2018, and urge the Government to work closely with the United Nations to implement concrete measures in this regard, as well as to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by its own armed forces and pro-government militia without delay.

198. I am deeply concerned about the fate of children, including of foreign origin, affiliated or allegedly affiliated with parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and call upon parties encountering and receiving these children to abide by international norms and standards and treat those children primarily as victims. In this regard, I stress the importance of developing protection-oriented rehabilitation activities for these children, so as to facilitate their reintegration into society.

199. I renew my call upon all parties to enhance their engagement in the United Nations-led intra-Syrian talks, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), in view of bringing sustainable peace to the country and ending violations against children.

## Yemen

200. The situation in Yemen remained grave and was marked by continued armed conflict. In November, a military escalation began between the principal belligerents, when the Houthis fired a ballistic missile towards Riyadh and subsequent air strikes and ground fighting intensified, including for the control of ports and supply routes. In December, political alliances shifted, causing intensified fighting in Sana'a between the Houthis and the General People's Congress, culminating in the killing of former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and causing further political instability in the country.

*Grave violations*

201. The United Nations verified 842 cases of the recruitment and use of boys as young as 11 years old. Among those cases, 534 (nearly two thirds) were attributed to the Houthis, 142 cases to the Security Belt Forces and 105 to the Yemeni Armed Forces, marking a substantial increase compared to 2016, with the majority of children aged between 15 and 17. Other parties included pro-government Popular Resistance (50) and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (1). The Governorate of Abyan was the location with the highest number of verified cases (156). Access restrictions to areas with AQAP presence led to a decrease in the ability to verify cases attributed to that group.

202. Children were mainly used to guard checkpoints and government buildings, for patrolling, fetching water and bringing food and equipment to military positions; 76 children were used as combatants. 31 boys were killed and 14 were maimed while associated with parties to the conflict. Reports indicate that financial payments by the Houthis were used as incentives for child association.

203. The United Nations documented the deprivation of liberty of 23 boys (aged between 13 and 17) by armed forces and groups for their alleged association with opposing parties. Three boys were detained by the Yemeni Armed Forces and one by the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen (hereafter the coalition). Thirteen boys were seized and deprived of their liberty by the Houthis, 5 by the Security Belt Forces and 1 by the Popular Resistance.

204. The United Nations verified the killing and maiming of 1,316 children (552 killed: 398 boys, 154 girls; 764 maimed: 549 boys, 215 girls), and 51 per cent of those casualties were caused by air strikes (368 killed, 300 injured). The second leading cause was ground fighting, including shelling and shooting (136 killed, 334 injured), followed by explosive remnants of war and mines (27 killed, 119 injured).

205. Of the total number of verified child casualties, 670 were attributed to the coalition (370 killed, 300 injured); 324 to the Houthis (83 killed, 241 injured); 41 to the Popular Resistance; 19 to other international forces fighting for the Government of Yemen; 10 to AQAP; and 4 to the Yemeni Armed Forces, among other parties.

206. The highest number of child casualties was documented in Ta'izz (35 per cent), with 459 children affected. Of those casualties, 286 were the result of ground fighting, with 245 child casualties attributed to the Houthis. The second highest number of casualties was documented in Sa'dah (187), where 168 cases were the result of air strikes and ground fighting on the northern border (2) and attributed to the coalition. The escalation of fighting between the Houthis and the Yemeni Armed Forces and affiliated groups, as well as increased air strikes, resulted in 113 child casualties in Hudaydah Governorate.

207. There was a marked decrease in verified attacks on schools and hospitals compared to 2016, when 48 schools and 23 hospitals were partially or completely destroyed.

208. The United Nations verified 20 attacks on schools, with 19 schools affected by aerial attacks attributed to the coalition, the majority of which occurred in Sa'dah (9), Hajjah (4), and Hudaydah (2). One incident was attributed to an unidentified armed group in Dali'. In addition, 11 attacks on hospitals were verified, affecting 9 hospitals and health facilities and resulting in their partial or complete destruction. Five attacks were attributed to the Houthis in Ta'izz , and five to the coalition in Hajjah (2), Hudaydah (1), Sa'dah (1) and Ta'izz (1). The remaining attack was attributed to the Security Belt Forces in Aden.

209. The United Nations verified eight incidents of the military use of schools in Ta'izz (3), Amanat al-Asimah (2), Sa'dah (2) and Sana'a (1) and two incidents of the military use of hospitals in Taiz; of these, three schools and one hospital were subsequently the target of an attack. The Houthis were responsible for five incidents of the military use of schools, the Yemeni Armed Forces for one, and the Popular Resistance for the military use of two schools and two hospitals.

210. The United Nations verified the abduction of one boy by the Houthis in Shabwah. The boy was subsequently engaged to fight with the armed group.

211. The United Nations documented 248 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including restrictions on movement (161), violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities (55) and interference in the delivery of humanitarian assistance (32). Most of the incidents were documented in Ta'izz (60), Hudaydah (44) and Sa'dah (31), with the majority attributed to the Houthis (168), Yemeni Armed Forces (35) and the coalition (15).

212. Access to frontline areas was challenging and restrictions and delays were experienced throughout 2017 at main entry ports for humanitarian aid. Following the launching of missiles by the Houthis into Saudi Arabia, the coalition imposed a total land, sea and air blockade between 5 and 24 November, thereby halting all humanitarian and commercial access. A partial blockade continued until 20 December.

*Developments and concerns*

213. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I am encouraged by the decrease in attacks on schools and hospitals attributed to the coalition. It reflects, among other things, the impact of preventive and protective measures taken, including the establishment of a child protection unit in the coalition headquarters, composed of civilian and military staff, put in place in coordination with my Special Representative. During my visit to Riyadh in April 2018, I was also encouraged by efforts undertaken by the Government of Saudi Arabia to support the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed groups in Yemen.

214. The action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Yemeni Armed Forces, signed in 2014, must be revitalized and updated. In this regard, I welcome the ongoing discussions between the Government of Yemen and my Special Representative regarding the drafting of protocols on the handover and release of children and the issuance of a command order by the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Yemeni Armed Forces in March 2018, recalling that the recruitment and use of children by the Government forces is forbidden and that violations must be reported. I further welcome the endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration by the Government of Yemen in October, which is an important step for the development

of concrete safeguards to ensure a better protection of these facilities, education personnel and children.

215. Notwithstanding this progress, I am deeply concerned that during the fourth quarter of 2017, the intensification of fighting resulted in an increased number of violations against children being committed by all parties. The number of children killed and maimed in Yemen remains unacceptably high, and those numbers have remained high in the first quarter of 2018, as does the number of children recruited and used by armed forces and groups. I acknowledge the Houthis' openness to engaging with the United Nations on child protection but remain deeply concerned about ongoing recruitment campaigns by the group, specifically targeting schools as a place of recruitment, and urge the group to establish preventive and protective measures. I further urge the coalition to continue strengthening mechanisms aimed at protecting children, particularly in view of preventing child casualties.

216. I remind all parties to abide by their obligations under international law to protect children from all forms of violence, including through respecting the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, to ensure humanitarian access to populations in need, to release children deprived of their liberty and hand them over to appropriate child protection actors and to engage constructively with the United Nations to prevent future violations.

## B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations

### India

217. Children continued to be affected by incidents of violence between armed groups and the Government, particularly in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and during tensions in Jammu and Kashmir.

*Grave violations*

218. The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children, including by the Naxalites, particularly in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Naxalites reportedly resorted to the use of a lottery system to conscript children in Jharkhand. In addition, three incidents of the recruitment and use of children were reported in Jammu and Kashmir in the context of clashes with national security forces. One case was attributed to Jaish-i-Mohammed and two to Hizbul Mujahideen. Unverified reports also indicate the use of children as informants and spies by national security forces.

219. Children continued to be killed and injured in the context of operations of national security forces against armed groups. According to Government data, 188 civilians were killed in Naxalite-affected regions, although no disaggregated data on children were available. On 9 March, a 15-year-old boy was killed by national security forces during a clash with alleged Lashkar-e-Tayyiba elements in Padgampora village, Pulwama district.

220. In Jharkhand State, suspected Naxalites elements attacked one school in Khunti district, partially destroying it. With regard to military use, the occupation of over 20 schools was documented by the Central Reserve Police Force in Srinagar, Kashmir, in April. Increased tensions in Jammu and Kashmir reportedly also led to school closures for varying periods, including in Rajouri (65) and Poonch (76) districts.

*Developments and concerns*

221. I welcome the Government's signature of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) in June 2017, and encourage the Government to put in place measures to hold perpetrators of child recruitment and use to account and engage with the United Nations in view of ending and preventing violations against children.

**Nigeria**

222. In north-east Nigeria, as well as in neighbouring countries, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, intensified attacks on civilians, including through suicide bombings and ground attacks. In the northern part of Borno State, a new Boko Haram faction emerged following its separation from the Abubakar Shekau faction.

*Grave violations*

223. The total number of verified cases of the recruitment and use of children decreased by almost 50 per cent, from 2,122 in 2016 to 1,092 (738 boys, 353 girls, 1 unknown sex) in 2017. The main perpetrator remained Boko Haram (1,051). The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) recruited 41 children, all of whom were used in support roles. The decrease may be attributed to the loss of territory by Boko Haram, the displacement of civilians from areas controlled by the group and the CJTF action plan, signed by the group in 2017.

224. In 2017, 2,199 children were deprived of liberty for their or their parents' alleged association with Boko Haram, in Nigeria (1,903), the Niger (239) and Cameroon (57). In 2017, the Nigerian authorities released 1,190 children, leaving 713 children in military detention at the time of reporting.

225. The United Nations verified a total of 881 children killed (570) and maimed (311) in Nigeria, attributed to Boko Haram (620) and to Nigerian Security Forces (NSF) (261). Almost half of all casualties resulted from suicide attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram (including the use of children as carriers of person-borne improvised explosive devices) (411). With regard to NSF, casualties were caused by aerial bombardments (235) and the targeting of children suspected to be carrying person-borne improvised explosive devices (26).

226. A worrying trend was the continued use of children by Boko Haram as carriers of person-borne improvised explosive devices, with 146 cases documented in Nigeria and 57 in Cameroon. Almost three quarters of the children used were girls (145).

227. The United Nations verified 45 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, affecting 131 children, including 9 boys. Cases were attributed to Boko Haram (9 boys, 116 girls) and NSF (6 girls). All child victims attributed to Boko Haram were abducted, raped or forcibly married to members of the group.

228. The United Nations verified four attacks on schools and one attack on a hospital in Nigeria attributed to Boko Haram (4) and NSF (1). Furthermore, two schools were attacked in far north Cameroon, eight hospitals in the Diffa region of the Niger and one hospital in far north Cameroon. At the time of writing, 14 schools continued to be used for military purposes by NSF in Nigeria, 10 in Borno State and 4 in Yobe State.

229. Boko Haram abducted 189 children (107 boys, 79 girls, 3 sex unknown). Between July and October, 90 children were abducted by Boko Haram during raids on villages across the borders of Nigeria with Cameroon and the Niger. In addition, 1,456 children in north-east Nigeria were verified as having been abducted by Boko

Haram during previous years. 82 of the Chibok schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in April 2014 were released as a result of internationally supported negotiations between Boko Haram and the Government, while 112 remain unaccounted for. On 19 February 2018, 105 girls were abducted from the Government Girls' Science Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State, by Boko Haram insurgents, further curtailing access to education for Nigerian girls.

230. Five incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, including ambushes and physical attacks on humanitarian workers. Four were attributed to Boko Haram and one to NSF.

*Developments and concerns*

231. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I commend CJTF for signing an action plan with the United Nations on 15 September to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and the important first steps taken for its implementation, including the promulgation of a standing order by CJTF to end and prevent child recruitment. I encourage CJTF to consolidate and to further accelerate the implementation of the action plan.

232. I remain concerned that children continued to be detained and urge the Government to release them and to swiftly adopt the handover protocol for children associated with armed groups, in line with international standards, and to ensure the sustainable reintegration of children. I also encourage the Government to cease the use of schools for military purposes, in line with the commitments in the Safe Schools Declaration, and to provide a protective educational environment for children, in particular for girls.

233. The continued number of violations by Boko Haram remains gravely disturbing, in particular the use of children as carriers of person-borne improvised explosive devices and the number of abductions, including the reported abduction of more than 100 girls in Dapchi, Yobe State, in 2018.

234. I am deeply concerned by the significant increase in the number of children killed and maimed and of cases of sexual violence and call on all parties to the conflict to take urgent action to improve the protection of children.

**Pakistan**

235. Since 2009, attacks by armed groups have progressively decreased, with 370 incidents reported in 2017. More than half of all incidents were attributed to Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and splinter groups, predominantly in Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Reports indicate an increasing presence of ISIL-KP, particularly in Balochistan and northern Sindh.

*Grave violations*

236. The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children, including from madrasas, and allegations of the use of children by armed groups for suicide attacks. In January, TTP released a video showing children, including girls, being instructed in how to perpetrate suicide attacks.

237. Age-disaggregated data on civilian casualties are limited, but incidents of children killed and injured in attacks by armed groups continued to be reported. In February, at least 75 people, including 20 children, were reportedly killed in a suicide attack in Sehwan, Sindh Province. In April, 14 persons, including 4 children, were reportedly killed when a passenger vehicle struck a roadside bomb in the Gudar area, FATA. ISIL-KP and TTP-Jamaat-ul-Ahrar both claimed the attack.

238. Eight attacks on educational facilities and students were reported, four targeting girls' education. For example, in March, unidentified individuals vandalized the Oxford Public School, located in Ghizer Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan, and threatened to bomb the school if female teachers did not cover themselves. In the same month, a girls' school located in Qila Abdullah in Balochistan Province was damaged in an attack, through the use of improvised explosive devices.

239. Attacks on health-care facilities and staff by armed groups continued in 2017, including 113 direct attacks (three personnel killed) or threats against polio vaccinators.

*Developments and concerns*

240. I am concerned by the continued attacks on schools by armed groups, particularly the targeting of girls' education. In this regard, I take note of ongoing efforts to review national policies on child rights, and encourage the Government to prioritize measures to deter future attacks on schools.

**Philippines**

241. The reporting period was marked by the five-month Marawi siege and the related military operation against the Maute Group, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), resulting in the enactment of martial law in Mindanao. In addition, the United Nations continued to document low-intensity armed engagements between Government forces, occasionally in coordination with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in territory controlled by the group, and armed groups, predominantly in Mindanao. Conflict-related incidents between the New People's Army (NPA) and Government forces supported by pro-government armed groups intensified, following the termination of the ceasefire agreement and the subsequent collapse of peace talks.

*Grave violations*

242. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 30 children (6 girls, 8 boys, 16 sex unknown) by armed groups. 16 children were used as human shields by BIFF in a single incident; 6 were recruited and used by NPA; and 8 by the Maute Group. Children were recruited and used for combat, as part of medical squads, as cooks and to extract gunpowder from firecrackers. The United Nations received additional unverified reports of the large-scale recruitment and use of children by the Maute Group during the Marawi siege and of nine children recruited by NPA, indicating that the actual number of violations is likely higher. Some of the children were reportedly killed in combat.

243. The United Nations documented the detention of 12 children for their alleged association with armed groups, none of whom were formally charged. For example, four boys were arrested and detained by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for their alleged association with ASG. The boys were blindfolded, handcuffed and beaten during their detention and subsequently taken to a hospital for medical treatment.

244. The United Nations verified the killing and maiming of 33 children (16 killed, 17 injured; 21 boys, 12 girls). 12 cases were attributed to AFP and 1 to NPA and included incidents of indiscriminate attacks. For instance, on 12 July, two boys and one girl, reportedly associated with NPA, were killed during an encounter with AFP in Compostela Valley province. 20 cases could not be attributed and included casualties caused by explosive remnants of war (10) and crossfire (8). In addition, an undetermined number of children were killed and injured during the Marawi siege.

245. Three cases of the rape of girls aged as young as 14 by the Maute Group were verified. The Government is following up on these cases. Additional cases were reported in the context of the Marawi siege.

246. The United Nations verified 60 attacks on schools and educational personnel (24) and health-care facilities (36) signifying a substantial increase compared to 2016 (12 attacks). Almost all cases (56) were the result of armed engagements, including bombardments, in the context of the Marawi siege. Many of the structures were occupied by the Maute Group at the time of attacks. Threats by AFP and pro-government armed groups against educational personnel working for schools run by non–governmental organizations in indigenous peoples' communities continued to be reported. In addition, the military use of six schools and one hospital was verified (AFP four, Philippine National Police one, BIFF one, Maute Group one). In addition to being used as bases during armed clashes, schools were frequently used as sites to provide services by the AFP in the context of civil-military operations.

247. Five incidents of abduction, involving seven children, were verified, including one abduction of a 7-year-old boy by ASG for a period of seven months, in Sulu province and of two 14-year-old girls by the Maute Group for four months.

*Developments and concerns*

248. In a positive development, the Government of the Philippines revived formal coordination meetings with the United Nations on incidents of grave violations against children, with a view to facilitating appropriate response to these cases. Notwithstanding this progress, I urge the Government to intensify engagement with the United Nations to address ongoing violations against children, ensure consistent application of its national child protection procedures and guidelines and facilitate access to conflict-affected areas for child protection actors.

249. I am deeply concerned by the increase in the number of grave violations against children in 2017, particularly in Mindanao, and remind all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international law and to prevent the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. I furthermore call upon armed groups that are recruiting and using children to take immediate steps to end and prevent the practice and to engage with the United Nations to develop action plans.

**Thailand**

250. Sporadic clashes between security forces and armed groups, as well as attacks by armed groups on civilian targets, continued in Thailand's southern border provinces.

*Grave violations*

251. The United Nations documented the lowest number of children killed (1) and injured (16) recorded in the past 14 years. Incidents resulted from attacks with the use of improvised explosive device and shooting. According to data from the Ministry of Education, no attacks on schools were perpetrated during the reporting period.

*Developments and concerns*

252. The security situation further improved in the southern border provinces in 2017, and I am encouraged by the cooperation on child protection issues between the Government and various partners, including the United Nations. I call upon the Government to take appropriate measures to prevent future violations, including by inviting the United Nations to conduct regular monitoring of grave violations against

children, and to enable programmatic prevention activities in the southern border provinces, as well as by including child protection concerns in its ongoing talks with armed groups.

## IV. Recommendations

253. **I am deeply concerned by the scale and severity of grave violations against children outlined in the present report, including high levels of killing and maiming, recruitment and use, sexual violence and abductions, and call upon all parties to immediately end and take all necessary measures to prevent such grave violations, including through ensuring accountability for perpetrators.**

254. **I urge Member States, whether acting alone or as part of coalitions or international forces, to ensure that their responses to all threats to peace and security are conducted in full compliance with international law. Children formerly associated with armed forces or groups should be seen primarily as victims and detention should only be used as a last resort, for the shortest period of time, and alternatives to detention should be prioritized whenever possible.**

255. **I call upon Member States to continue supporting the implementation of action plans and other commitments aimed at strengthening the protection of children in armed conflict, including by facilitating the engagement of the United Nations with armed groups.**

256. **In view of the continuing high levels of cross-border recruitment and the subsequent challenges in terms of the repatriation and reintegration of children separated from armed forces or groups, I call upon Member States and regional and subregional organizations to engage closely with the United Nations in order to ensure a coordinated response based on international law and keeping in mind the best interest of the child.**

257. **I encourage Member States, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to further strengthen dedicated child protection capacities and to engage with the United Nations to prioritize the development of tools to forestall grave violations, including through the adoption of prevention plans aimed at systematizing preventive measures.**

258. **I call upon the Security Council to continue to support the children and armed conflict agenda by including provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of United Nations peace operations and to request adequate child protection capacity in order to mainstream child protection, conduct dialogue on action plans, release and reintegrate children and further strengthen monitoring and reporting.**

259. **I enjoin the donor community to engage in a discussion to address the funding gaps for the reintegration of children recruited and used and to support the establishment of a multi-year funding mechanism, thereby allowing child protection actors to react swiftly to the release of children and put in place long-term viable alternatives to military life, notably by placing a specific focus on girls, on psychosocial support and on education programmes and vocational training.**

260. **I welcome all steps taken to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, and call upon Member States to further strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict, including through ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict as well as**

**the endorsement and implementation of the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or groups, the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles) and the Safe Schools Declaration.**

## V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report

261. Regarding new listings, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Bana Mura militias perpetrated incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence and abduction, and the Kamuina Nsapu perpetrated high levels of recruitment and use of children, attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions. Both groups have been listed for those respective violations. In Mali, the Platform, which includes the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés and the self-defence groups Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy, has been listed for the recruitment and use of children. Similarly, in Yemen, the Security Belt Forces have been listed for the recruitment and use of children.

262. Other previously listed parties to conflict have had additional violations added, on the basis of incidents that occurred in 2017. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, several armed groups have engaged in patterns of abductions, including the Mai-Mai Mazembe, Nyatura and Raia Mutomboki and have been listed for such violations. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, have been listed for killing and maiming and rape and other forms of sexual violence, in the light of verified cases in northern Rakhine State. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab has been listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals. In South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army has been listed for attacks on schools and hospitals.

263. In terms of delisting, in Colombia, following the transformation of FARC-EP into a political party, the group ended all child recruitment, released 135 children and has been delisted for ceasing recruitment and use. In the Sudan, the Government security forces took all necessary steps in its action plan pertaining to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, and that party has been delisted. In Yemen, a significant decrease in the number of attacks on schools and hospitals by the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen and preventive measures that have been put in place have led to its delisting for that violation. In the Sudan, pro-government militias ceased to exist and were removed from the list.

264. Other modifications to the list are the result of changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In that regard, in Afghanistan, the name of the Taliban has been amended. In the Central African Republic, the name of the former Séléka coalition was amended to reflect its core membership. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the name of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and of the Nduma and Mai-Mai Cheka have been adapted. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw Kyi put in place measures to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and will be listed in section B of annex I to the present report for that violation. Similarly, the Kachin Independence Army, the Karenni Army, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and the Shan State Army have been also been listed in section B of annex I for measures they have taken. In Iraq, given that the popular mobilization forces have been placed under the direct command of the Iraqi armed forces and that the Government has put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children, the popular mobilization forces have been listed under "State actors" in section B of annex I. In South Sudan, the split of the former Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition is reflected in annex I. In

the Syrian Arab Republic, the name of the Army of Islam and the Nusrah Front were modified to reflect changes on the ground. In Yemen, following renewed engagement with the United Nations, the Government put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children, and the Government forces will therefore be listed in section B of annex I.

# Annex I

## Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council*

## A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children

### Parties in Afghanistan

*Non-State actors*

1. Haqqani Network[a,b]
2. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar[a,b]
3. ISIL-Khorasan Province[a,b]
4. Taliban forces and affiliated groups[a,b,d,e]

### Parties in Colombia

*Non-State actors*

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional[a]

### Parties in the Central African Republic

*Non-State actors*

1. Former Séléka coalition and associated armed groups, including the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotrique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique[a,b,c,d]
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka[a,b,c]
3. Lord's Resistance Army[a,b,c,e]

### Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

*Non-State actors*

1. Allied Democratic Forces[a,b,d,e]
2. Bana Mura militias[c,e]
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi[a,c,d,e]
4. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri[a,c,d,e]
5. Kamuina Nsapu[a,d,e]

* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

[a] Party that recruits and uses children.
[b] Party that kills and maims children.
[c] Party that perpetrates rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.
[d] Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.
[e] Party that abducts children.
[f] Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions *1539 (2004)* and *1612 (2005)*.

6. Lord's Resistance Army[a,b,c,e]
7. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain[a]
8. Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (also known as Mai-Mai Lafontaine)[a]
9. Mai-Mai Mazembe[a,b,e]
10. Mai-Mai Simba[a,c]
11. Mai-Mai Kata Katanga[a]
12. Nduma défense du Congo[a,b]
13. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové[a,b]
14. Nyatura[a,e]
15. Raia Mutomboki[a,c,e]

**Parties in Iraq**

*Non-State actors*

1. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant[a,b,c,d,e]

**Parties in Mali**

*Non-State actors*

1. Ansar Eddine[a,c]
2. Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest[a,c]
3. Platform, including affiliated groups[a]

**Parties in Myanmar**

*State actors*

1. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces[b,c]

*Non-State actors*

1. Karen National Liberation Army[a]
2. United Wa State Army[a]

**Parties in Somalia**

*Non-State actors*

1. Al-Shabaab[a,b,c,d,e]
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ)[a]

**Parties in South Sudan**

*State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army[a,b,c,d,e,f]

*Non-State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition — pro-Machar[a,b,f]
2. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition — pro-Taban Deng[a,b,f]
3. White Army[a]

**Parties in the Sudan**

*Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement[a,f]
2. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid[a]
3. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi[a,f]

**Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

*State actors*

1. Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias[a,b,c,d]

*Non-State actors*

1. Ahrar al-Sham[a,b]
2. Groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army[a]
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant[a,b,c,d,e]
4. Jaysh al-Islam[a]
5. Nusrah Front-led Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham[a,b]
6. People's Protection Units[a]

**Parties in Yemen**

*Non-State actors*

1. Houthis/Ansar Allah[a,b,d]
2. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al-Sharia[a]
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees[a]
4. Security Belt Forces[a]

## B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children

**Parties in Afghanistan**

*State actors*

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police[a,f]

**Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

*State actors*

1. Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo[c,f]

**Parties in Iraq**

*State actors*

1. Popular mobilization forces[a]

**Parties in Mali**

*Non-State actors*

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad[a,c,f]

**Parties in Myanmar**

*State actors*

1. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces[a,f]

*Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army[a]
2. Kachin Independence Army[a]
3. Karenni Army[a]
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council[a]
5. Shan State Army[a]

**Parties in Somalia**

*State actors*

1. Somali National Army[a,b,f]

**Parties in the Sudan**

*Non-State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North[a,f]

**Parties in Yemen**

*State actors*

1. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces[a,f]
2. Coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen[b]

## Annex II

**Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations***

### A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

1. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram[a,b,c,d,e]

**Parties in the Philippines**

*Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group[a]
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters[a]
3. New People's Army[a]

### B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

1. Civilian Joint Task Force[a,f]

* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

[a] Party that recruits and uses children.

[b] Party that kills and maims children.

[c] Party that perpetrates rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

[d] Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

[e] Party that abducts children.

[f] Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).